

The Carrizo Plain National Monument, San Luis Obispo and Kern Counties, California, is a wintering spot for mountain plover. The size of the Monument is over 200,000 acres but in any given winter suitable habitat for mountain plovers can range from 40 acres to well over 100 acres dependent on rainfall and the subsequent growth or non-growth of vegetation or residual growth left over from previous years. BLM has held a one day survey of all suitable habitat within the Monument since 2005. Most surveys have also included acreage immediately adjacent to the Monument on private lands as well. The total numbers of birds seen during the surveys range from 57 to 540. Sightings of individual groups however, have been as small as nine.

Every so often the planets align just right and we think we might be able to pull off another state-wide survey but attempts so far have not been successful.

**Note:** More recently, long-billed curlews have been added to the survey and they are noted on the data forms as well.

### **Survey Results/Observations:**

(all sightings have occurred within San Luis Obispo Co, CA)

<b>Species</b>	<b>Survey Date</b>	<b>Numbers Detected</b>	<b>Habitat</b>	<b>Notes</b>
2005	21 January 2005	75	Level terrain; short grass	
2006	11 January 2006	381	Level terrain; short grass	
2007	18 January 2007	79 inside of Monument; 29 outside of Monument	Level terrain; short grass	birds foraging and in flight
2008	4 February 2008	57	Not reported	Rain cancelled the first scheduled survey date. The second survey had only six participants and many roads were too muddy to do a complete survey.
2009	27 January 2009	540 inside of Monument; 51 outside of Monument	Level terrain; short grass <1”to2”	Additional birds hidden from view and not counted; birds foraging and in flight

**Habitat Notes:** Habitat ranged from 0 inches of vegetation to ~2 inches in most places. Most birds were seen in vegetation less than 1 inch tall. The exception was in 2008 when birds were

observed foraging on giant kangaroo rat precincts (cleared areas around burrow systems similar to those of prairie dogs) with the surrounding vegetation 5 inches or taller, much taller than expected for mountain plover. Terrain was generally level with no shrubs in the immediate vicinity of birds seen.

In each year the survey was conducted, there was much more suitable habitat that was available where no birds were found.

**Predators:** Only two predators, a ferruginous hawk and a Northern harrier, were observed in the vicinity of birds during the surveys.

**Bands:** No birds were observed to have bands during any of the surveys.

**Participants:** Surveys are usually conducted by 12 to 20 observers broken into groups of two or more that are each given a section to survey. Any novice birders are always paired with experienced birders.